

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 1749

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TW
SUBJECT: KMT AND INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS

1. MOST INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS ELECTED TO OFFICE IN LAST NOVEMBER'S LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE SO FAR HAVING REMARKABLY LITTLE TROUBLE DEALING WITH THE KMT-DOMINATED ESTABLISHMENT. DURING A DOWN-ISLAND TRIP LAST WEEK, POLITICIANS AND LOCAL OBSERVERS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS. ONE IS THAT MANY OF THE NEWLY-ELECTED POLITICIANS (SUCH AS TAINAN MAYOR SU NAN-CHENG, TAOYUAN MAGISTRATE HSU HSIN-LIANG, KAOHSIUNG MAGISTRATE HUANG YU-JEN) HAVE ENOUGH POLITICAL EXPERIENCE, BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE KMT, TO MAKE THEM EFFECTIVE BUREAUCRATIC FIGHTERS. BY FAR THE MOST COMMONLY OFFERED EXPLANATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE KMT CANNOT AFFORD THE FURTHER DAMAGE TO ITS LOCAL ORGANIZATION AND REPUTATION WHICH WOULD RESULT IF INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS (MANY OF WHOM WON BY IMPRESSIVE MARGINS) WERE ABLE TO PUBLICIZE KMT EFFORTS TO UNDERCUT THEM.

2. THE KMT NEVERTHELESS HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO UNDERCUT THE
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EFFECTIVENESS OF INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS, PRESUMABLY WHERE IT THINKS IT CAN GET AWAY WITH IT. SO FAR, THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY APPEARS TO BE CONFINED TO POLITICIANS BELOW THE MAGISTRATE/MAYOR LEVEL, AND TO AFFECT PARTICULARLY INDEPENDENT PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLYMEN IN MORE REMOTE AREAS. TWO OF THESE FROM YUNLIN COUNTY RECENTLY GAVE EXAMPLES OF THIS TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER. SU-HUNG YUEH-CHIAO CLAIMED THAT

THE LOCAL ESTABLISHMENT TOLD PEOPLE INVOLVED IN COURT CASES NOT TO SEEK HER HELP, OR THEIR SENTENCES WOULD BE INCREASED. CHANG HSIEN-TUNG SAID THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS OCCASIONALLY ASKED PETITIONERS WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF CHANG, AND THAT ANY EXPRESSED APPROBATION GOT THEM LESS FAVORABLE TREATMENT.

3. THE REAL TEST OF THE KMT'S ABILITY TO LIMIT THE INFLUENCE OF INDEPENDENT OFFICE-HOLDERS WILL PROBABLY NOT BEGIN UNTIL MAY, WHEN LOCAL CITY AND COUNTY COUNCILS MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE LAST YEAR'S ELECTIONS. WE EXPECT THE PARTY WILL MOVE AGAINST THE WEAKER AND MORE ISOLATED INDEPENDENTS, BUT WILL BE MORE WARY OF APPEARING UNCOOPERATIVE TO THE EXTENT IT RISKS PRODUCING A GREATER BACKLASH.

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